

# THE **MPL** RECORDER

VOLUME IX, NO. 3

AUGUST, 1967

A letter published from time to time by Motion Picture Laboratories in the interest of the 16MM film industry

Copyright Motion Picture Laboratories, Inc., 1967  
Permission will be readily granted to reprint any material in  
THE RECORDER. Write The Editor, Box 2627, Memphis, Tenn.

MOTION PICTURE LABORATORIES, INC., 781 MAIN STREET, MEMPHIS 6, TENNESSEE

## U-T SPORTS—THROUGH THE VIEWFINDER DOCUMENTARY AND ENTERTAINMENT FILMS

A "fan" is defined by Webster as one who is enthusiastic about a sport. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe the average sports fan—if there is such an animal—as some kind of fanatic NUT who lives and dies with each victory or defeat of his favorite team.

This latter description could apply to Ernie Robertson, head of the University of Tennessee's Photographic Service. Most sports fans, in turn, might classify Ernie's job as recreation rather than work. He follows U-T basketball and football teams wherever they go, knows all the coaches and players, and sees every game—but always through the viewfinder of his camera.

Ernie and his crew are responsible for all motion picture photography of U-T sports. This doesn't prevent him from being a sports "fan" in every sense of the word, but it has forced the curtailment of any emotional display during the course of a ball game. His shouts of joy or occasional tears must wait until the final score is in.

The 1967 Volunteer basketball team, Southeastern Conference champions, awarded Ernie an "Oscar" for his outstanding photographic services. Since Oscar winners are considered professionals of the highest quality, we asked Ernie how he handles sports movie assignments—what is required and how it is achieved.

### ***Basketball Photography Is A One Man Job***

Basketball, according to Ernie, is the easier of the two sports to shoot . . . requiring only one camera and one lens setting for an entire game.

The Vols Basketball games are generally filmed in B&W only, using an Auricon 1200 camera. An Angenieux 12-120mm zoom lens (standard on all U-T cameras for sports work) is used to show wide-area play patterns or to give close-up looks at one-on-one situations or unusually rugged backboard play.

Eastman's Tri X or DuPont's 932 film has been used in virtually every basketball arena in the SEC, without any need for forced processing. Lighting, while not always ideally uniform, remains constant throughout a game. One pre-game meter reading is all that is required.

All home basketball games (and many of the Vols' out-of-town games) are filmed with a single-system voice track, utilizing a live pick-up of play-by-play narration for radio. This makes the films extremely valuable for TV replay and showing before alumni groups and other similar organizations.



**Ernie Robertson and his "Oscar" for outstanding performance.**

Coaches, of course, make their analysis of the films without using the sound track.

Basketball games may require as little as 800 ft. or as much as 2400 ft. of film, depending on a variety of factors. The addition of sound, coupled with the continuous nature of the game, increases film usage to an average of 1600 ft. per game. Usually the middle four-to-six minutes of each half are omitted from the film unless the game is particularly close.

Travel to and from out-of-town games is with the team, aboard the University's own 24-seat Convair. Living accommodations, meals, and the moments of joy or disappointment are all shared . . . or endured.

No basketball highlights film has been made, but at least one home game is photographed each year in color with an additional floor camera added to give a variety of shots. This film, produced with alumni groups and recruiting trips in

*(Continued on Page 2)*



## U-T SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY (Con't)

mind, is edited with a double-system sound track . . . and attempts to capture atmosphere as well as documentation of the game.

### *Football Requires More Film, More Cameras*

The film requirements for football are more diverse than those for basketball, calling for more cameras and manpower, and presenting more problems.

The three men who shoot UT football games operate four cameras—three motion picture cameras and one still camera. (See drawing for setup of cameras.) Camera #1, operated by Ernie himself, is a 16mm Auricon 1200 and is loaded with Ektachrome EF. This camera shoots the television footage which will later be used for the production of a Highlights movie.

Cameras #2 and #3, operated by Guy Taylor, are Auricon Pro-600's and are loaded with Tri X Reversal or DuPont 932. These cameras are used to shoot the Coaches' film—one for offense plays and one for defense plays.

Camera #4, a 4 x 5 Graphic, is usually operated by Earl Walker, who provides the Polaroid shots of an opponent's various defensive alignments during a game. This camera is mounted on the defense movie camera as a space-saving measure, since neither camera is used when the other is in operation.

The arrangement in the drawing is the ideal setup for all home games where a three-window camera booth is available. Space in a press box is always at a premium (even in some newer ones) and lack of space in some out-of-town stadiums necessitates occasional changes in the arrangement. However, since one man operates both Coaching cameras, these two are always located side-by-side.

### *Camera Films Used Are Fast For News Type Coverage*

Although nearly all U-T games are day games, all three cameras are loaded with fast films—Ektachrome EF, Tri X and DuPont 932—because football filming is a lot like news work. It must be filmed under all kinds of weather conditions and there is no waiting for bright sun or better conditions.

Ernie and his crew have seen games that opened in brilliant sunshine and finished in almost total darkness because of rapidly changing weather. And, shadows moving across the field as a game progresses, always make for interesting exposure problems when a play moves from bright sunlight into deep shadow.

To cope with these exposure variations, they use a Spectra meter with a 5 degree spot attachment for reflected light readings from the press box. Readings are checked regularly (often between every play) with one reading serving all cameras. Variation between sun and deep shadows is usually about two stops and the film has no value if a play "disappears" entirely into a shadowed area. Ernie says they always increase exposure, for adequate shadow detail, on those occasions when play patterns are only partially in sunlight. F-stops are sometimes adjusted in mid-play to compensate for lighting conditions.

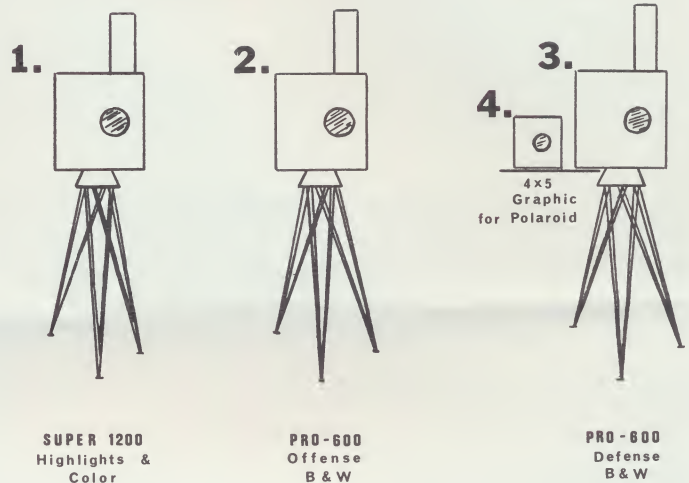


Diagram for U-T camera setup in the home stadium press box.

### *The Coaches' Film Is Straight Documentary*

The film shot for the U-T coaches is a "study" film as compared to the Highlights film as "entertainment." "The first thing a cameraman has to learn," says Ernie, "is the purpose of his film and the importance of giving his client (in this case, the coach) what he wants from his film."

What the coach wants is a film that shows patterns of plays. The cameraman for the coaching film must know where the ball is, but he must also keep in mind that the coaches want to see how blocking assignments are handled, how pass routes are run, or how players react to various defensive assignments.

Although a good knowledge of the game helps the sports photographer, Ernie does not consider it necessary for the cameraman to be an "expert" in anything except his ability to operate the camera and deliver the type of film that may be required.

The shooting of study films particularly allows no margin for emotional involvement in a game. The cameraman should remain coldly detached from the scoreboard and how his team is faring, contenting himself with his role of merely recording the event.

The coaching films are shot at sound speed and are shown on the variable-speed Kodak Analyst projector. Sometimes, Ernie says, the coaches will literally wear a film out, running it back and forth to study a play. Although they are not film experts, the coaches know what they need to see on the screen and Ernie feels that frequent conferences with the coaches can be of great value to the photography crew. Are pans too fast or have zooms reduced the effectiveness of studying a par-

(Continued on Page 3)



## U-T SPORTS (Con't)

ticular type of play? Would a wider or a tighter shot be more effective in a given situation?

The players, too, usually view these study films and an alert photographer can help these athletes build pride in themselves. "For instance, we usually shoot some close-up footage of the boy who has just made a 'big' play, follow the defensive team off the field after a particularly successful stand, or try to show a boy being congratulated by his teammates," Ernie says. "We feel these little extras, sometimes only two or three feet long, add much pride in a job well done. The coaches have confirmed the effectiveness of this approach."

The U-T film crew also shoots practice drills and scrimmages for study purposes, films which, at best, can sometimes be a bit boring for even the coaches and players who view them.

"To put a little variety into these films (without detracting from their purpose), we sometimes let the camera wander over to pick up a pretty co-ed in a Mini-skirt or some funny action on the field. This provides comic relief and helps keep people awake."

The important point to remember here is that extras like this should be added only after discussions with the coaches. If you have established a good working relationship with the men involved, and have made every effort to give them what they want, then you can make suggestions from the cinematographer's point of view.

### *The Highlights Film Is Audience Oriented*

Footage for "Highlights" films is anything but a clinical approach to recording a game. Here the cameraman must adapt his thinking to the fan's point of view and attempt to capture the atmosphere of each game while, at the same time, staying "on top" of each play.

The cameraman wants to try and put his audience squarely in the middle of every play. This means that most shots are extremely tight after a play begins. The fan wants to see the hand-off, the deftly executed cut-back or pitch-out, or the spectacular catch. This means that the photographer must become action-oriented rather than play-pattern-oriented. He must also be on the alert for player and spectator reactions that will convey the excitement of the moment.

"For instance, on place kicks, you follow the ball through the air—completely ignoring line blocking or a team's rush... and into the stands. You also shoot the spectator who is arguing with police about returning the ball," Ernie says. "If you shot something like this for the coaches, you'd be out of work within minutes after delivering the film."

Footage of even the most exciting games can become boring if the cameraman doesn't vary his shots. Ernie finds judicious use of a zoom lens a big plus factor for this purpose and he emphasizes the word "judicious." He opens some plays with a wide shot; he may "zero in" on only the quarter-back; or he can pan the stadium before a play and then zoom in on his team as they break their huddle.

(Continued on Page 4)

## *McGeary Speaking-*

### **IT'S TIME FOR A SECOND REVOLUTION! TIME FOR A NEW LOOK AT OLD SUBJECT**

For the last two years, everyone in our 16mm business has been talking about the revolution from black and white to color, particularly for television material. Color is more dramatic and color is more spectacular, but color is also more expensive.

When you shoot in color, all the costs go up. Set construction becomes more expensive as you watch out for colors that show up poorly on the TV tube. Costs mount when you hire a color consultant to handle color complications for you.

Color takes more set light, more time to rig lights and more time to shoot. Someone has to watch out for all these details and the experts in these fields never handle the jobs for nothing.

The camera film you shoot costs more and when you take it to the lab for completion, all their prices are higher than for comparable work in black and white. You pass these increased costs on to the client, of course, and he to his client and so down the line. So what's the problem?

The problem is how do you arrange the extra money needed to finance the film while it is in production, before you get paid by your client? The more costly color production requires more financial backing and it has to come from somewhere.

In the past, many producers have counted on their labs to finance their productions. "I'll pay you when the client pays me." Fine, maybe, for the producer but rather hard on the lab man, particularly if you pay him no interest on your overdue account. The lab man has his own work to finance and he really isn't in the money loaning business. Sure, he's interested in serving you but he's primarily a film man, not a banker.

Slow payments hurt you two ways. 1) you lose any discount the lab may offer for prompt payment, increasing your production costs. 2) late payments to any creditor hurt your credit rating and worry over money problems uses up a lot of energy you could use for increasing your sales and creating better pictures. Besides, many large companies and most government organizations will not give large film contracts to producers who cannot prove financial responsibility.

So what's the answer to your money problems? There isn't any single answer for every producer but we can all start to find our own answers by taking a new look at our methods of financing. In future issues, we would like to take a look at this problem and, with your help, discuss ways it has been handled by producers who have found solutions.

So let us hear from you on this subject.

*Frank M. McGeary*

Frank M. McGeary

THE **MPL** RECORDER



## U-T SPORTS (Con't)

Between 1800 and 2000 ft. of color film is shot during the average game with about 200 to 400 ft. of this being crowd reactions, game sidelights and anything else that Ernie feels will brighten up the Highlights film.

In addition to his color film of the football games, Ernie also films the "Pride of the Southland" band in its half-time performance. These seven minute, sound-on-film sequences are used by the band director for study purposes and kept as a record of all band performances.

### *Season's End Brings A Big Editing Job*

Ten Highlights games at 2000 ft. each gives 20,000 feet of film to be edited into a 30 to 40 minute film at the end of the season. "You can't minimize this problem by short-cutting on shooting," Ernie says, "because there's no way to predict which play or series of plays will prove to be the outstanding one of that particular game. You must shoot all plays in every game."

Since Ernie's duties as sports photographer are only part of his responsibilities, time during the season for pre-editing is pretty scarce. Usually it all stacks up to be done at the season's end. And, if the team makes it to a Bowl Game (the Bluebonnet in 1965 and the Gator in 1966) putting the film together for an answer print screening on January 6 can be rough.

Play selection for the year-end film is made in conference with the coaches and every effort is made to determine which plays were valid highlights of each game. There is usually no lack of exciting moments, and decisions must be made as to how much can finally be culled after preliminary selections are made.

"The big thing to remember," according to Ernie, "is that this is YOUR Highlights film. You can't ignore opponents. You wouldn't want to anyway. But I look for plays that will make our Vols look good and help sell more season tickets for the next year."

This fall, Ernie's color film will also be used for television. Working with producers of the "Doug Dickey Show," he will add single-system sound to his color film, featuring a play-by-play narration done especially for the camera. Although this sound track will not be used for the Highlights film, experience with a similar technique in basketball over the past three years has proven its value for TV use.

"Filming for Highlights or TV use allows a bit more emotional involvement than is possible when shooting a study film," Ernie says. "But a considerable measure of self-discipline must still prevail. Really good film coverage doesn't leave much time for cheering."

Ernie learned his lesson in self-discipline the hard way—following a pass interception that was returned for the winning touchdown late in a game. "I didn't lose the ball," he said, "but I did forget to turn off the camera when the play was over. I was so busy jumping around and hollering—trying to hug everybody within reaching distance—that the camera shot more than 50 ft. of absolutely nothing. I even forgot to shoot the extra point play."

EDITED BY: Lynn Bigbee



### **Motion Picture Laboratories Gives You The Master Craftsmanship Your Film Deserves**

MOTION PICTURE LABORATORIES, INC.  
781 S. Main Street • Memphis 6, Tennessee  
Phone 948-0456

Even now, Ernie admits an inability to avoid pulling for the Vols in clutch situations. "The tension is sometimes almost more than you can stand without being able to let off steam in some manner," he says. "When a game is over, and we're packing up to leave, I often feel like I've played the game too."

### **FOR SALE**

MOY EDGE NUMBERING MACHINE with extra numbering block. Write Box 2627, Memphis, Tenn. 38102, or call Blaine Baker, (901) 948-0456.

### **POSITION AVAILABLE**

Southern Industrial Production Company needs experienced Writer-Director who can also serve as Production Manager. Excellent Opportunity for right man. Write Box 301, c/o THE MPL RECORDER, Box 2627, Memphis, Tenn. 38102.

EDITOR—man or woman, with experience in business film productions. Conforming and cutting track and picture to script. Work in modern, well-equipped studio. Opportunity for fast, accurate worker. Write Box 302, c/o THE MPL RECORDER.

NOTE: Replies to ads placed in this newsletter will be forwarded, unopened, to the box holder. Ed.

# THE **MPL** RECORDER